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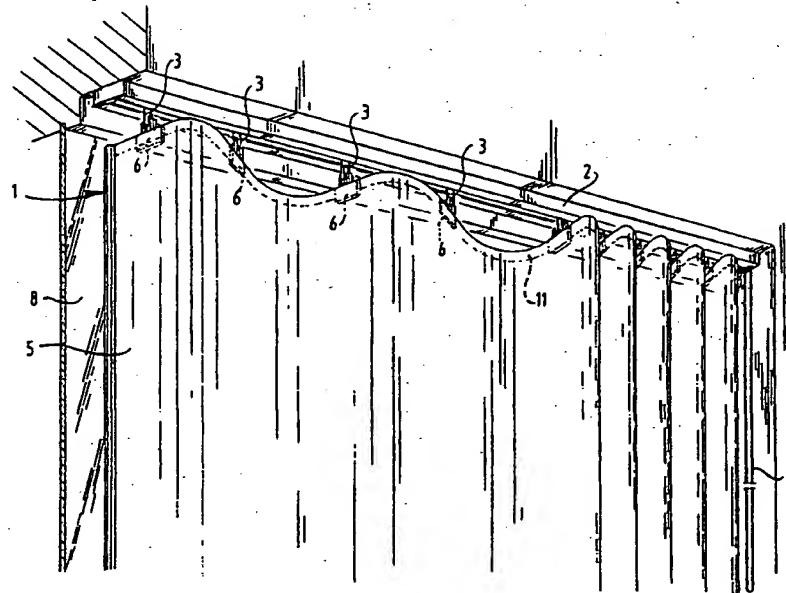
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(74) Agent: SCHUMANN, Bernard, Herman, Johan; Arnold & Siedsma, Sweelinckplein 1, NL-2517 GK The Hague (NL).			

(54) Title: SYSTEM WITH A RAIL, AT LEAST ONE PIECE OF CLOTH AND A NUMBER OF FIXING ELEMENTS FOR FIXING SAID CLOTH TO SAID RAIL



(57) Abstract

Assembly of a per se known rail system which is suitable for fixing of vertical slats thereto, which rail system comprises: a rail; a number of runners arranged guidably in the rail for fixing to the slats; and operating means for guiding the runners in the rail, which assembly further comprises: at least one piece of cloth; and a number of fixing elements which are each adapted on one side for fixing to one of the runners and on the other side for fixing to the cloth, this such that the cloth is fixed to two or more of the runners.

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**ASSEMBLY OF A RAIL SYSTEM, AT LEAST ONE PIECE
OF CLOTH AND A NUMBER OF FIXING ELEMENTS FOR
FIXING SAID CLOTH TO SAID RAIL SYSTEM**

In the field of interior design the use of a system consisting of an assembly with vertical slats fixed thereto has been known for a long time. Such a rail system generally has a decorative function and also 5 serves to protect architectural openings in a building. The known assembly is usually applied as window covering.

The invention has for its object to provide a new variant of the known assembly.

10 The assembly according to the invention relates to an assembly of a per se known rail system which is suitable for fixing of vertical slats thereto, which rail system comprises:

a rail;

15 a number of runners arranged guidably in the rail for fixing to the slats; and

operating means for guiding the runners in the rail, which assembly further comprises:

at least one piece of cloth; and

20 a number of fixing elements which are each adapted on one side for fixing to one of the runners and on the other side for fixing to the cloth, this such that the cloth is fixed to two or more of the runners.

The assembly according to the invention provides 25 the option of replacing the vertical slats by cloth in the known assembly. This meets an increasing demand in the market for a "warmer" and more "homely" alternative to the slats, which are generally considered more

"businesslike". Starting from the known assembly, the slats can be replaced by cloth in simple manner, wherein use can be made of the already installed and often expensive rail system, and only the slats have to be 5 replaced by the described cloth and the fixing elements.

The assembly according to the invention can of course also be purchased integrally as replacement for or instead of for instance a curtain or net curtain which is already present. The assembly according to the 10 invention has the advantage relative to a rail with curtain and/or net curtain material that the cloth does not have to be pre-pleated. The cloth can in fact be arranged pleated in the fixing elements according to the judgement of the user, which will become more apparent 15 with reference to the discussion of an embodiment following hereinafter.

The assembly according to the invention moreover provides great convenience of use, particularly owing to the presence of operating means, such as a cord, for 20 guiding the runners in the rail and thereby (partially) opening and closing the cloth.

In a first preferred embodiment the runners are provided with a snap mechanism and the fixing elements each comprise an eye for fixing to the runners by 25 snapping the eye fixedly into the snap mechanism. The fixing elements are hereby fixed to the runners in the same manner as the vertical slats are fixed to the runners in the known rail system.

The fixing elements preferably each comprise two 30 plate-like parts which are placed at a certain mutual distance and which run substantially parallel to each other and are mutually connected on one side such that between the plate-like parts a cavity is present for receiving the cloth. These fixing elements have a simple 35 embodiment and can be produced at low cost. This

embodiment is moreover elegant since the fixing elements can be hidden from view by causing the cloth to hang over the fixing elements on one side.

In a further preferred embodiment the cloth is provided on the side to be directed towards the rail over substantially the entire width thereof with a strengthening strip. In preference the height of the strengthening strip substantially corresponds to the depth of the cavity of a fixing element and/or the strengthening strip is provided on at least one side with adhesive material, for instance double-sided tape, for fixing the cloth to the strengthening strip. The strengthening strip preferably comprises plastic material, for instance LDPE. Use of such a strengthening strip enables arranging of the cloth to the fixing elements in rapid and simple manner without it being damaged.

In another embodiment the cloth is provided on at least one edge along approximately the full length thereof with a clampingly arranged finishing profile as a finish for the cloth. Use of a finishing profile makes hemming of the edges of the cloth or arranging of a weighted bottom hem therein unnecessary. The edges of the cloth can hereby be adequately finished in inexpensive and rapid manner in order to prevent fraying.

The finishing profile preferably comprises two hinging parts which are each provided with a clamping member, which clamping members can co-act to form a snap connection. For arranging of the finishing profile at a uniform distance from the edge of the cloth the clamping members preferably extend roughly parallel to each other in substantially transverse direction of the finishing profile such that the cloth can be placed against one of the two clamping members. In order to strengthen the

clamping of the finishing profile on the cloth a further finishing profile is preferably arranged round the finishing profile, which further finishing profile has a greater stiffness than the finishing profile. The fixing 5 elements preferably comprise plastic material such as polycarbonate.

The invention also relates to a fixing element and a finishing profile such as described as component of the assembly according to the invention.

10 The invention will now be further elucidated with reference to the drawing, in which

figure 1 shows a schematic perspective view of an assembly according to the invention;

15 figure 2 shows a schematic perspective view of a fixing element as component of the assembly according to the invention;

figure 3 shows a schematic perspective view of the fixing element of figure 2 having fixed therein the cloth of the assembly according to the invention,

20 wherein fixing of the fixing element to the rail system is also illustrated;

figure 4 is a schematic perspective view of a finishing profile for finishing the edges of the cloth;

25 figure 5 shows a schematic perspective view of a further finishing profile which can be arranged round the finishing profile of figure 4; and

30 figure 6 is a schematic perspective view of the finishing profiles of figures 4 and 5 in operative position, in which they are arranged clampingly round the cloth.

Figure 1 shows schematically a perspective view of an assembly 1 according to the invention. Assembly 1 comprises a per se known rail 2 in which carriages or runners 3 are guidably arranged. Operating means 4, in 35 this embodiment in the form of a cord, are provided for

guiding runners 3 in rail 2 in known manner. A piece of cloth is fixed by means of fixing means 6 to the runners 3 of rail 2. Assembly 1 serves in this embodiment as window covering and is arranged in front of a window 8.

5 In the context of this invention the term cloth is understood to mean: all woven materials as well as non-woven materials. Suitable materials comprise both natural materials and synthetic materials. A few examples are cotton, polyester, combinations of 10 polyester and acryl and combinations of polyester and cotton. Further included are all materials which can be used as curtain and or net-curtain material. The material can preferably be pleated.

15 The cloth generally consists of one or two parts, similar to a curtain or net-curtain. It will be apparent however that the cloth can, if desired, consist of a greater number of parts.

20 Figure 2 shows the fixing element 6 of figure 1 in more detail. Fixing element 6 consists of two plate-like parts 9 which run substantially parallel to each other and are mutually connected at the bottom such that plate-like members 9 enclose a cavity 10. Eye 7 serves for fixing to runners 3. Runners 3 are provided with a snap mechanism known in the field, which is shown in the 25 figures and will not be further discussed within the context of this invention. Eye 7 can be snapped fixedly into runners 3 in the same way as slats in a known assembly.

30 Figure 3 shows schematically the attachment of fixing element 6 to cloth 5. Cloth 5 is provided on the top side along practically the full width thereof with a strengthening strip 11. The height of strip 11 corresponds with the depth of cavity 10 of fixing element 6. Strip 11 is preferably fixed to cloth 5 by 35 means of adhesive material, for instance double-sided

tape. The attachment of cloth 5 to fixing element 6 takes place by arranging strengthening strip 11 in cavity 10 in clamping manner. One side of fixing element 6 can herein be hidden from view in elegant manner by 5 the overhanging cloth 5.

Figure 4 shows a finishing profile for the side edges of cloth 5. In order to strengthen the clamping on the cloth a further finishing profile 13, shown in figure 5, is pushed over finishing profile 12. This is 10 shown in figure 6.

The operation of finishing profiles 12 and 13 is as follows. Finishing profile 12 consists of two hinging parts 15, 16 which are hingedly connected to each other by means of a material hinge 14. In the closed situation 15 shown in figure 6, clamping members 17 and 18, which extend transversely of respectively part 15 and part 16, form a snap connection for holding finishing profile 12 in the closed position. Cloth 5 is herein held clampingly by further clamping members 19 and 20.

20 Placing of cloth 5 against one of the clamping members, in this example 18, ensures that the finishing profile engages at the same distance from this edge along practically the whole edge of cloth 5.

Fixing elements 6, strengthening strip 11 and 25 finishing profiles 12 and 13 preferably comprise plastic material. An example of a suitable material for the fixing elements is polycarbonate, an example of a suitable material for the strengthening strip is LDPE (= Low Density Polyethylene). Hinge 14 and further clamping 30 members 19 and 20 of finishing profile 12 preferably comprise softer plastic material than the other components of the finishing profiles. An example of a suitable soft plastic material is hard PVC. An example of a suitable harder plastic material for use in further 35 finishing profile 13, hinging parts 15 and 16 and

clamping members 17 and 18 is thermoplastic polyurethane. A transparent plastic is preferably used.

The invention is of course not limited to the shown and illustrated preferred embodiment but comprises all 5 embodiments which are consistent with the foregoing description and which fall within the scope of the appended claims.

CLAIMS

1. Assembly of
a per se known rail system which is suitable for
fixing of vertical slats thereto, which rail system
comprises:

5 a rail;
a number of runners arranged guidably in the rail
for fixing to the slats; and
operating means for guiding the runners in the
rail, which assembly further comprises:

10 at least one piece of cloth; and
a number of fixing elements which are each adapted
on one side for fixing to one of the runners and on the
other side for fixing to the cloth, this such that the
cloth is fixed to two or more of the runners.

15 2. Assembly as claimed in claim 1, wherein the
runners are provided with a snap mechanism and wherein
the fixing elements each comprise an eye for fixing to
the runners by snapping the eye fixedly into the snap
mechanism.

20 3. Assembly as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the
fixing elements each comprise two plate-like parts which
are placed at a certain mutual distance and which run
substantially parallel to each other and are mutually
connected on one side such that between the plate-like
parts a cavity is present for receiving the cloth.

25 4. Assembly as claimed in claim 3, wherein the
cloth is provided on the side to be directed towards the
rail over substantially the entire width thereof with a
strengthening strip.

30 5. Assembly as claimed in claim 4, wherein the
height of the strengthening strip substantially

corresponds to the depth of the cavity of a fixing element.

6. Assembly as claimed in claim 4 or 5, wherein the strengthening strip is provided on at least one side with adhesive material, for instance double-sided tape, for fixing the cloth to the strengthening strip.

7. Assembly as claimed in any of the claims 4-6, wherein the strengthening strip comprises plastic material, for instance LDPE.

10 8. Assembly as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, wherein the fixing elements comprise plastic material, for instance polycarbonate.

15 9. Assembly as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, wherein the cloth is provided on at least one edge along approximately the full length thereof with a clampingly arranged finishing profile as a finish for the cloth.

20 10. Assembly as claimed in claim 9, wherein the finishing profile comprises two hinging parts which are each provided with a clamping member, which clamping members can co-act to form a snap connection.

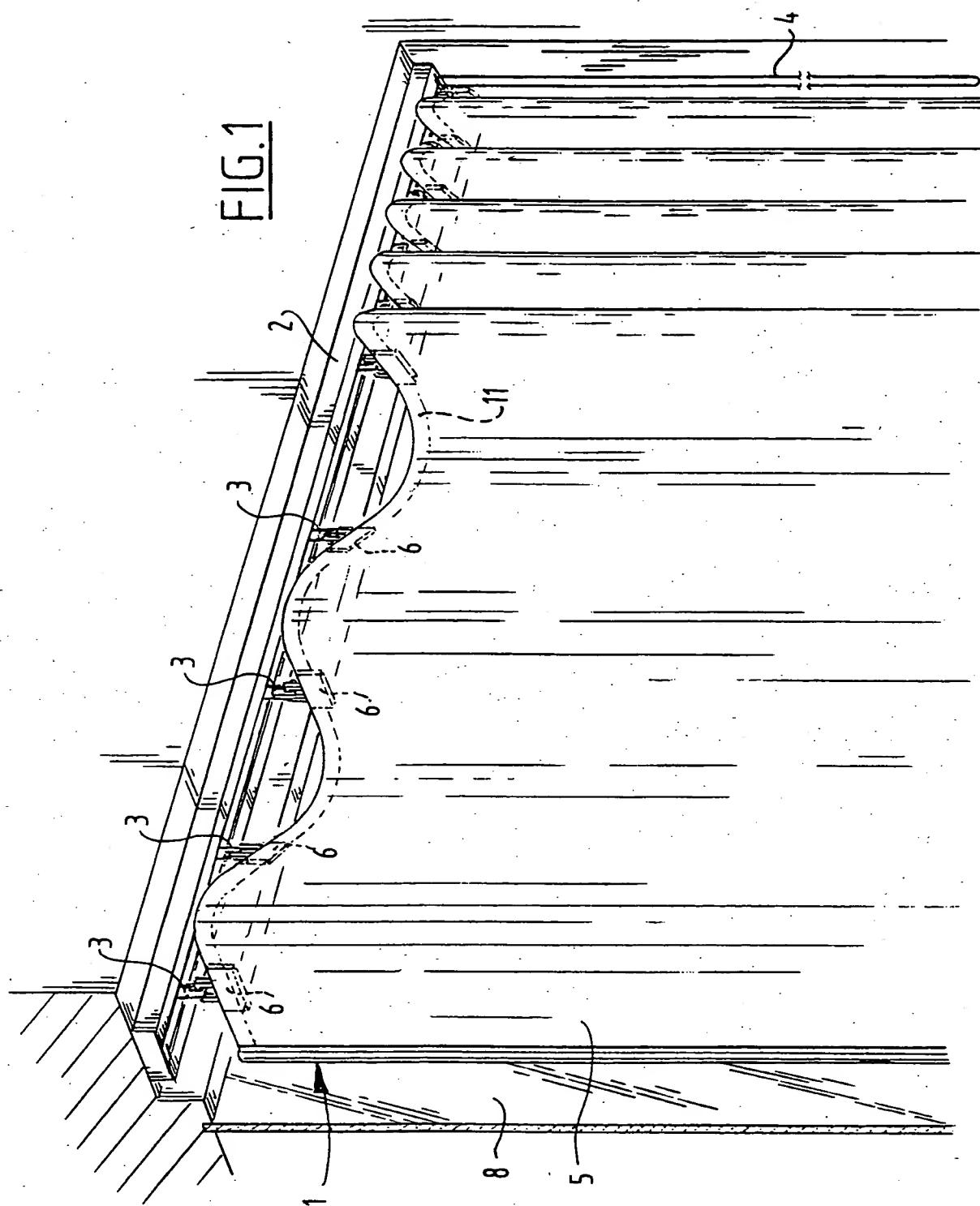
25 11. Assembly as claimed in claim 10, wherein the clamping members extend roughly parallel to each other in substantially transverse direction of the finishing profile such that the cloth can be placed against one of the two clamping members so as to arrange the finishing profile at a uniform distance from the edge of the cloth.

30 12. Assembly as claimed in claim 9, 10 or 11, wherein a further finishing profile is arranged round the finishing profile, which further finishing profile has a greater stiffness than the finishing profile in order to strengthen the clamping of the finishing profile on the cloth.

13. Fixing element such as described as component of the assembly as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, which fixing element is adapted on one side for fixing to one of the runners of the rail system and on 5 the other side for fixing to the cloth.

14. Finishing profile such as described as component of the assembly as claimed in any of the foregoing claims, which finishing profile is adapted for clamping fixing thereof to at least one edge of the 10 cloth forming part of the assembly, which finishing profile comprises two hinging parts which are each provided with a clamping member, which clamping members can co-act to form a snap connection.

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FIG.2

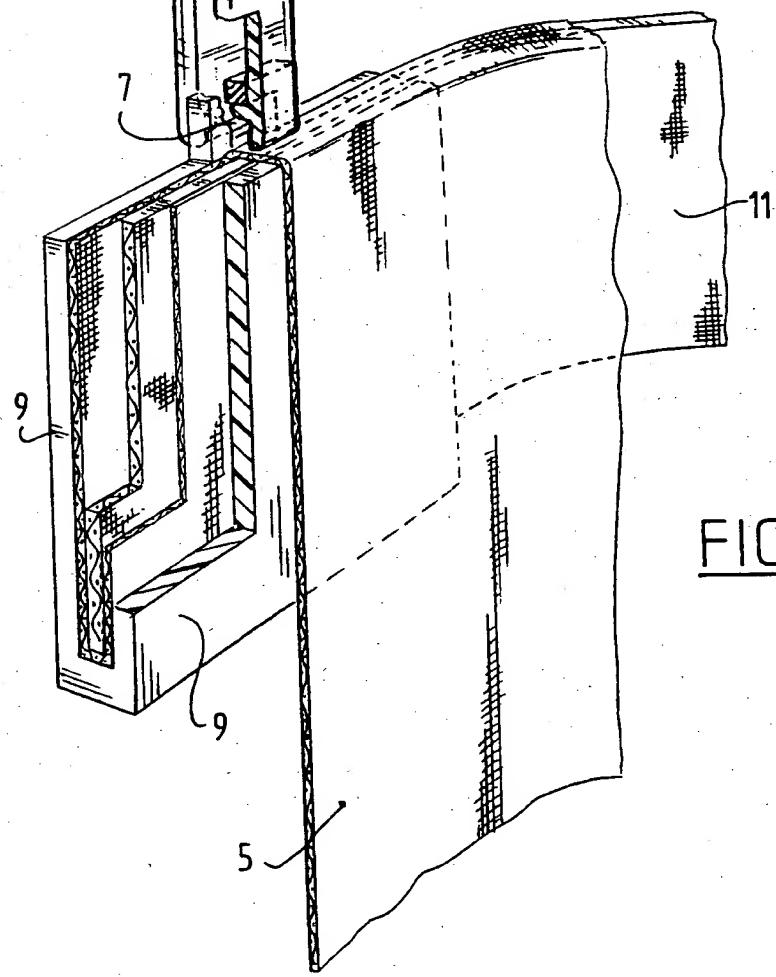
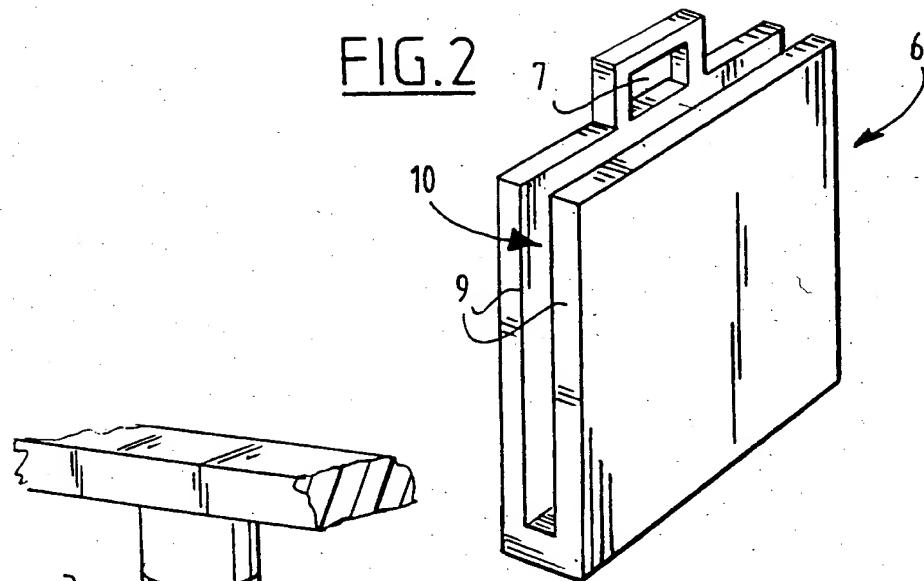
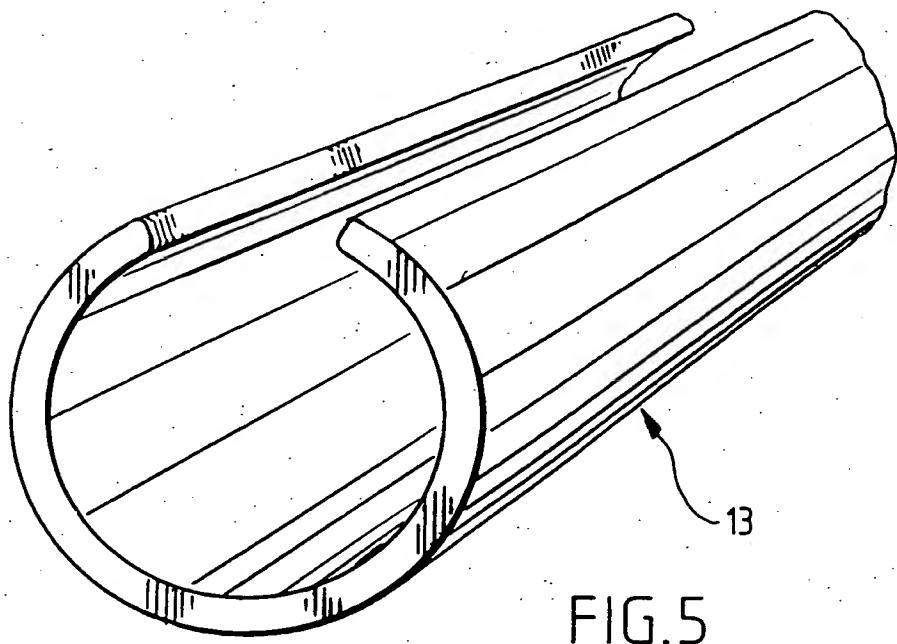
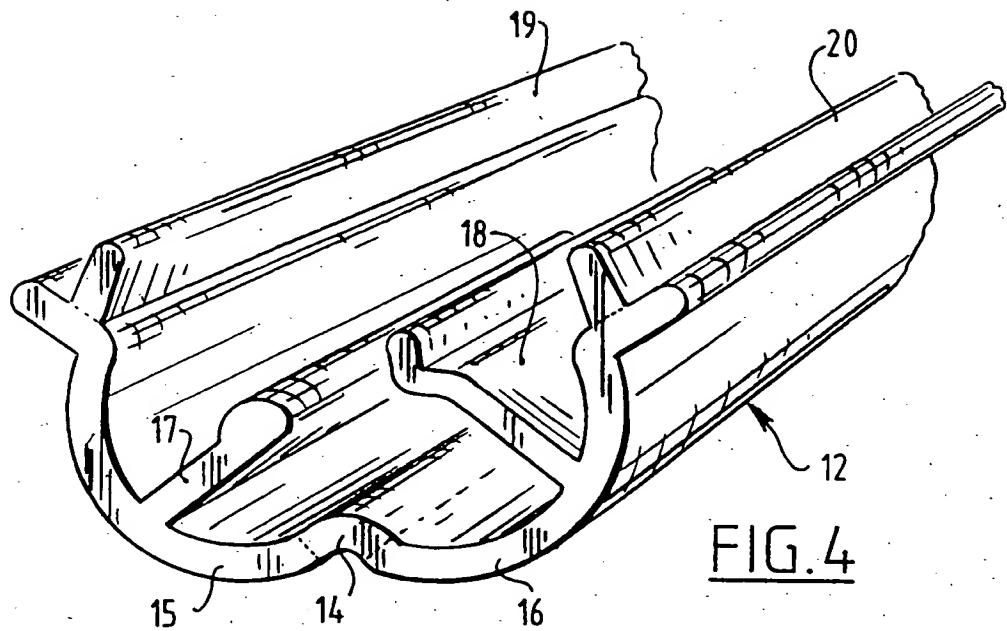
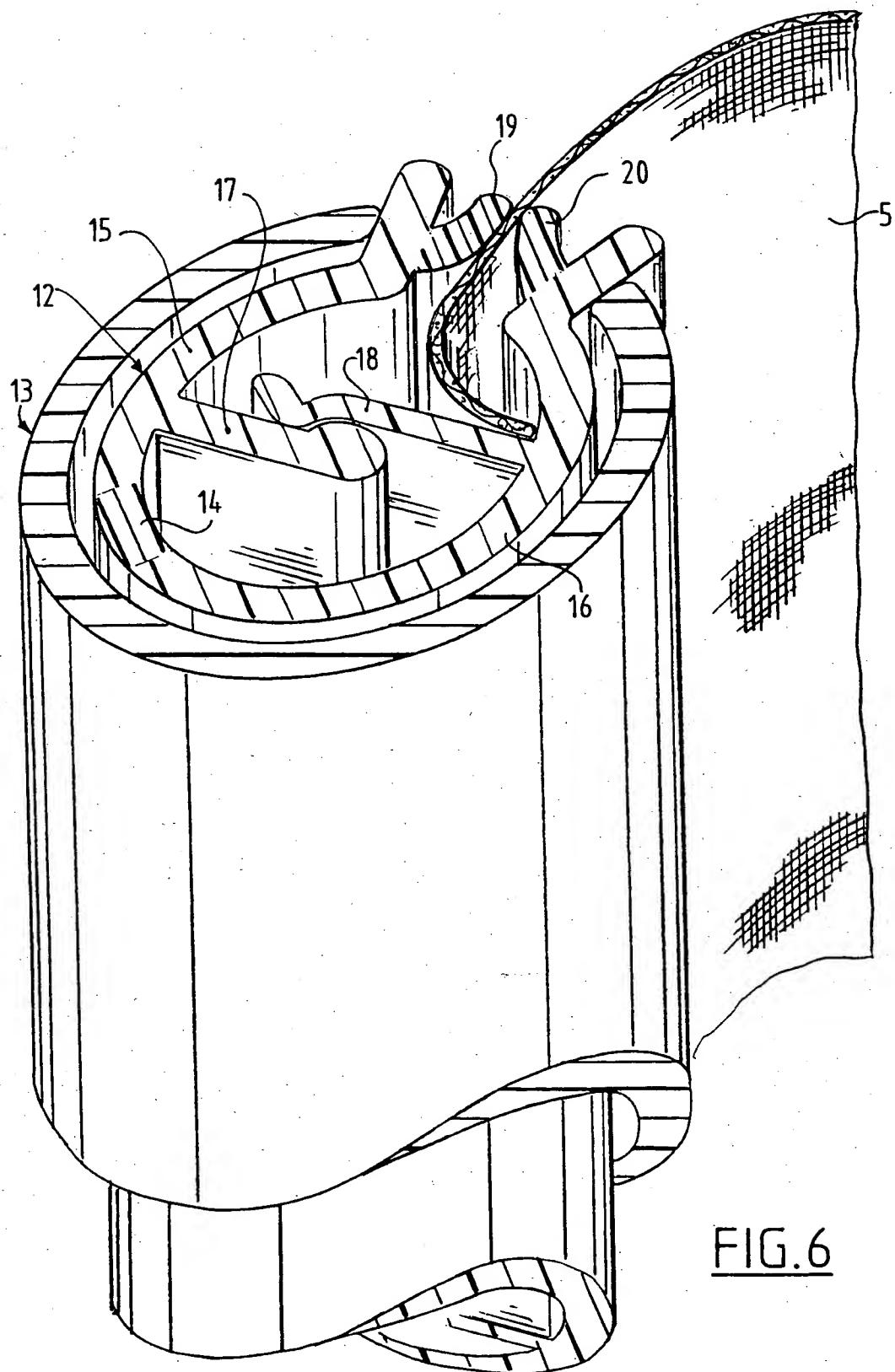


FIG.3

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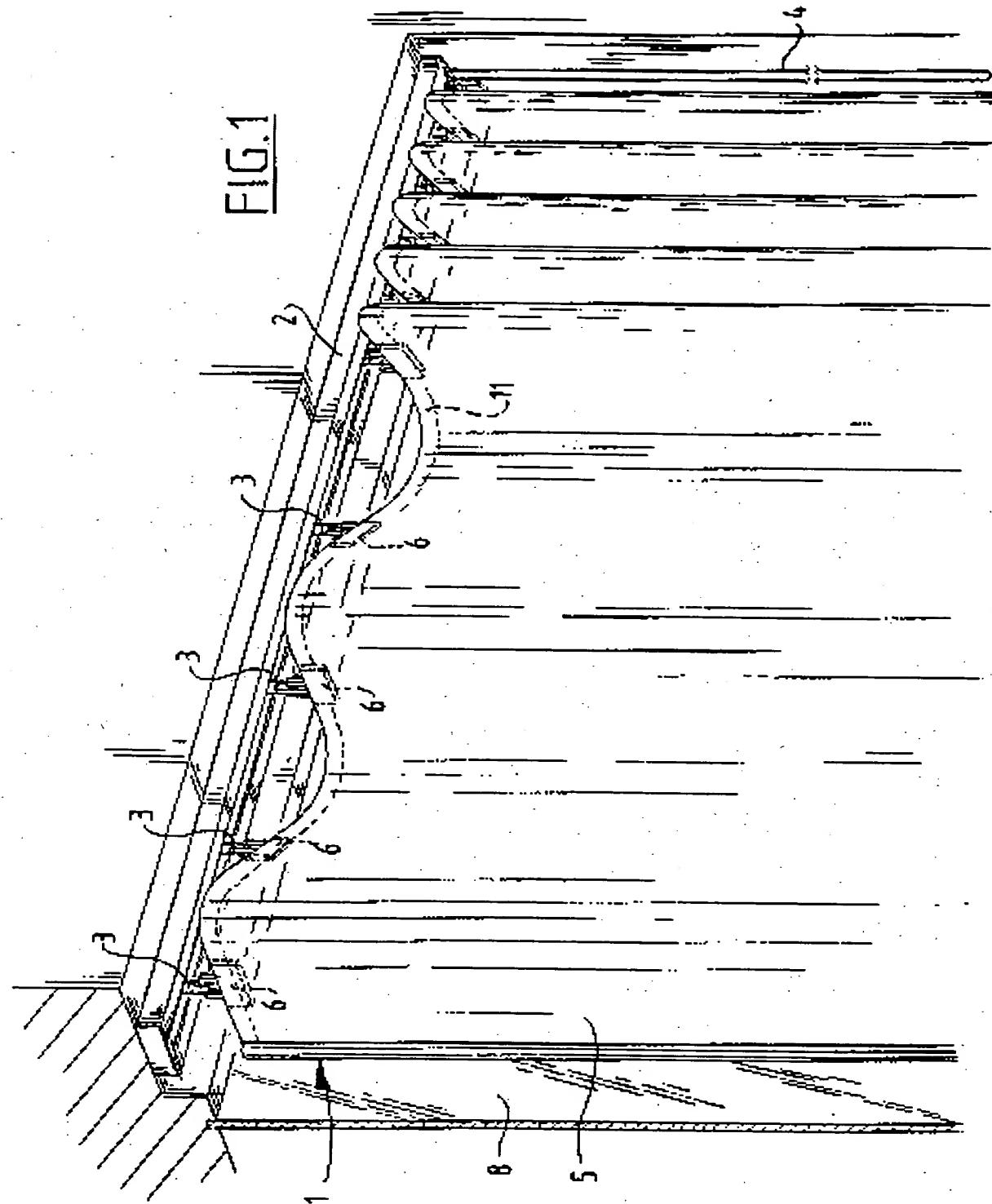


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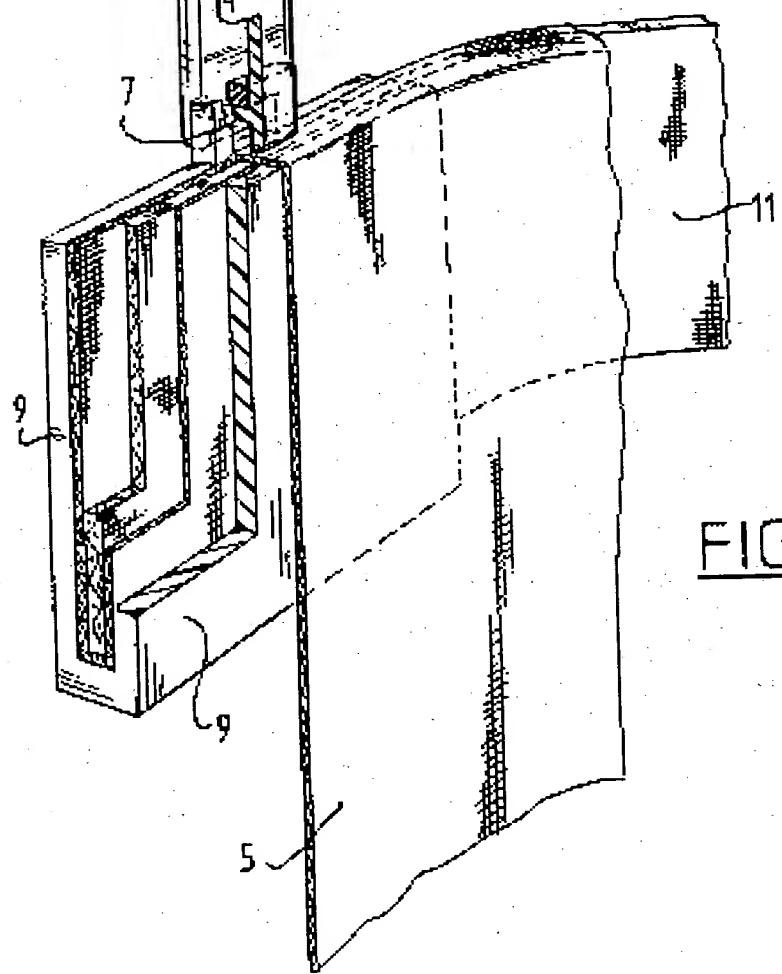
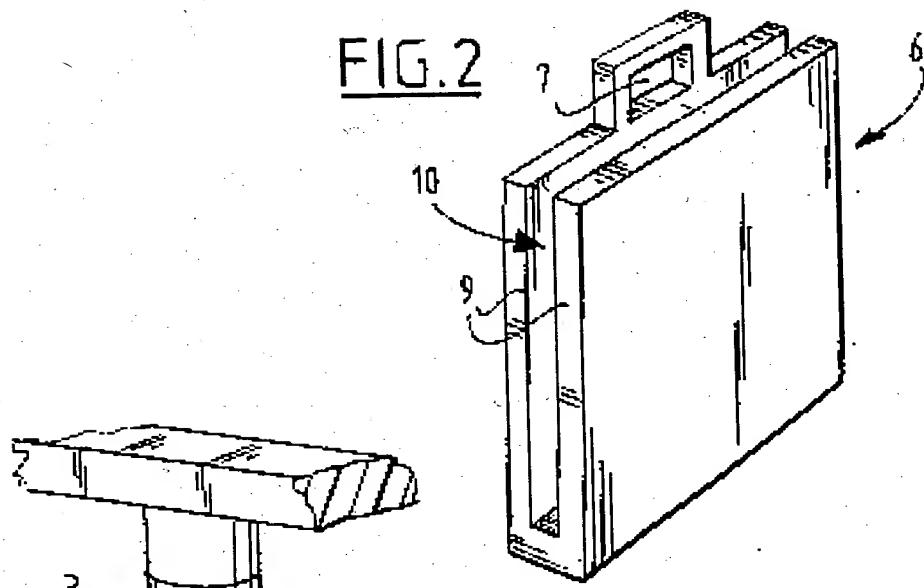


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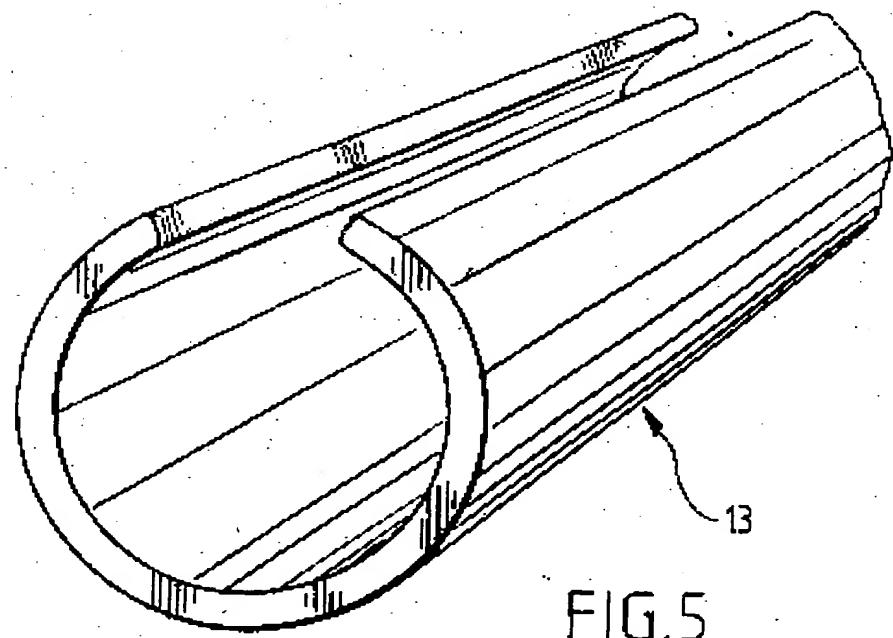
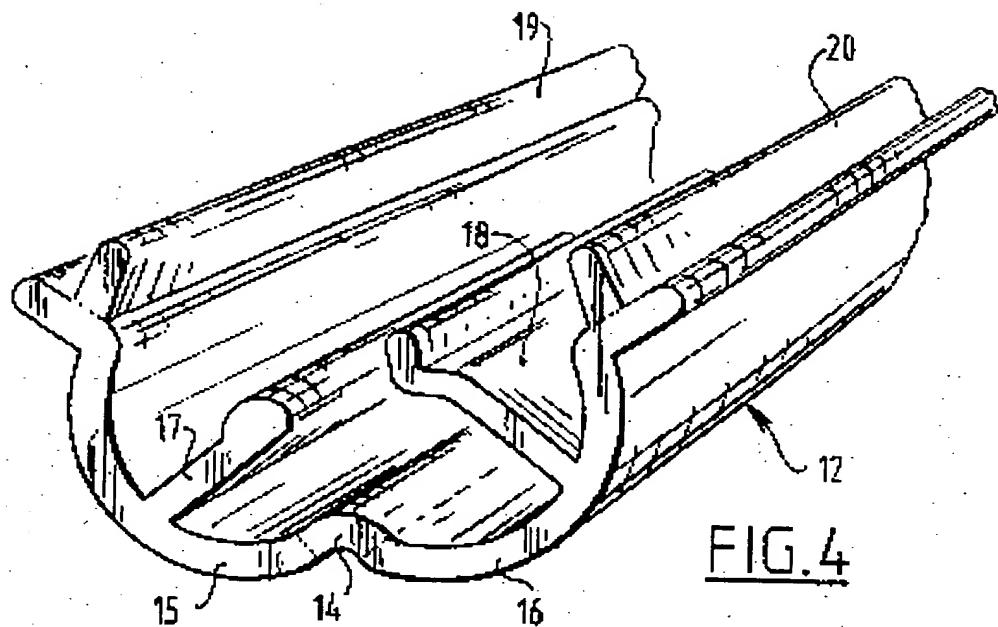
FIG. 1



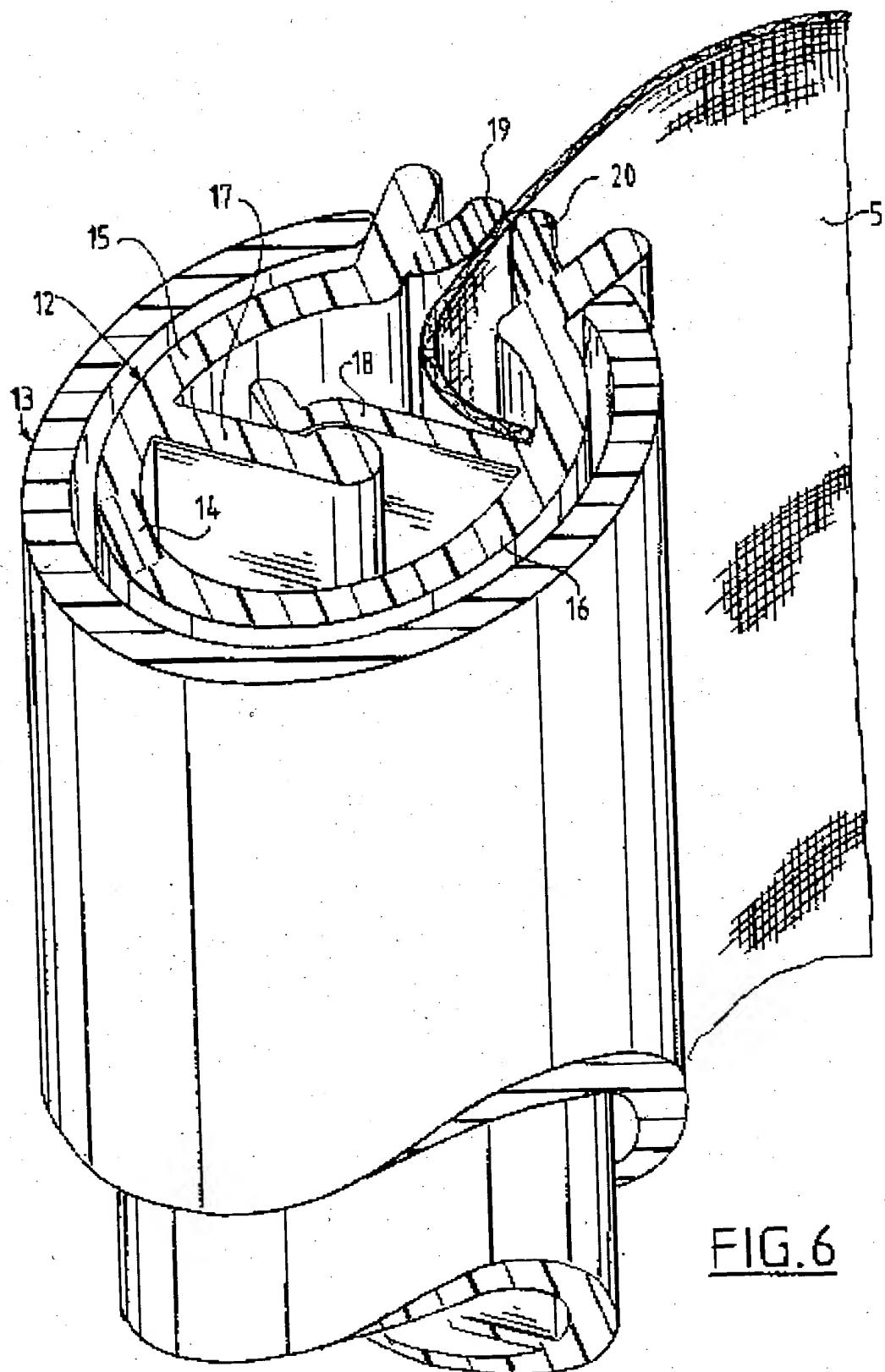
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FIG.2FIG.3

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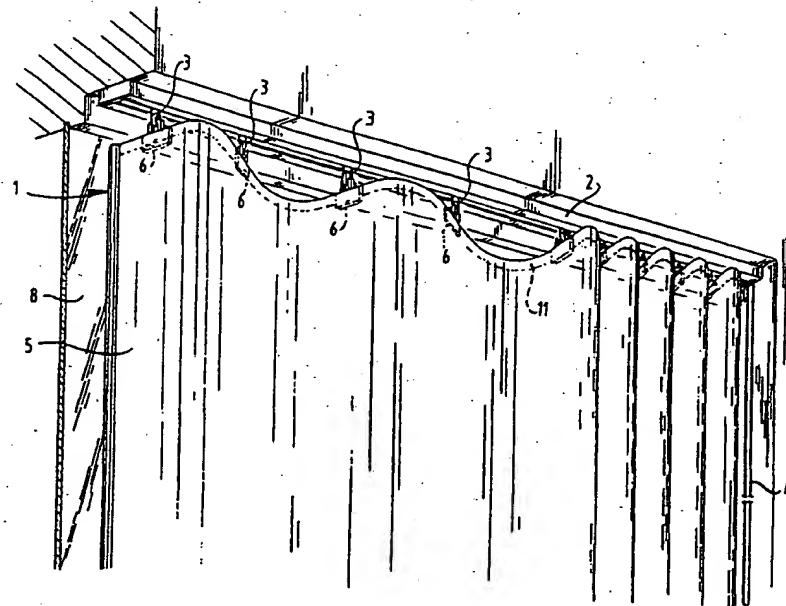




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(72) Inventor; and		
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(54) Title: SYSTEM WITH A RAIL, AT LEAST ONE PIECE OF CLOTH AND A NUMBER OF FIXING ELEMENTS FOR FIXING SAID CLOTH TO SAID RAIL



(57) Abstract

Assembly (1) of a per se known rail system which is suitable for fixing of vertical slats thereto, which rail system comprises: a rail (2); a number of runners (3) arranged guidably in the rail for fixing to the slats; and operating means (4) for guiding the runners (3) in the rail (2), which assembly (1) further comprises: at least one piece of cloth (5); and a number of fixing elements (6) which are each adapted on one side for fixing to one of the runners (3) and on the other side for fixing to the cloth (5), this such that the cloth (5) is fixed to two or more of the runners (3).

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

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C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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X	US 3 851 699 A (SHAPIRO H) 3 December 1974 see column 1, line 21 - line 27	1,13
Y	see column 1, line 65 - column 2, line 22 see column 3, line 30 - line 48; figure 5	2-4,7
X	US 3 844 330 A (HYMAN D) 29 October 1974 see column 1, line 5 - line 32 see column 1, line 53 - column 2, line 11 see column 2, line 58 - column 3, line 28; figures 1-3	1,13
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Y	DE 11 86 181 B (BÜNGER) 28 January 1965 see column 4, line 15 - line 68; figures 1-3 ---	3,4,7
A	EP 0 120 425 A (LEIBOWITZ MARTIN NICK) 3 October 1984 see page 15, line 28 - page 16, line 11; figures 15A,15B ---	3
A	US 4 356 855 A (HOLZER JOSEPH C) 2 November 1982 see column 2, line 58 - column 5, line 35; figures ---	2,3
A	US 3 626 429 A (TODER ELLIS I) 7 December 1971 see column 2, line 58 - column 3, line 10; figures 1-9 ---	2,8
A	EP 0 692 603 A (NIEN WEI JAI) 17 January 1996 see column 3, line 11 - line 48; figures 1,2,4 see column 1, line 19 - line 30 ---	2-6
A	FR 2 269 903 A (BROZEK PIERRE) 5 December 1975 see page 3, line 19 - line 38; figures 1-3 ---	4,5
A	FR 2 121 955 A (DAGUES BIE ANDREE) 25 August 1972 see page 2, line 39 - page 4, line 8; figures -----	6

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/NL 98/00735

Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)

This International Search Report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. Claims Nos.: because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. Claims Nos.: because they relate to parts of the International Application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful International Search can be carried out, specifically:

3. Claims Nos.: because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

see additional sheet

1. As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers all searchable claims.

2. As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.

3. As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:

4. No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this International Search Report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

1-8,13,9-12,14 (when dependant from the first subject)

Remark on Protest

The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.

No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 210

1. Claims: 1-8,13 en 9-12,
14 (when dependant from the first subject)

Connection of a curtain or drape fabric to a rail system
originally conceived for vertical louver type blinds
(searched)

2. Claims: 1 en 9-12,
14 (when dependant from the first subject)

Finishing profile for the edge of a drape or curtain fabric
(not searched)

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/NL 98/00735

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